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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2006

In Today's Papers

Iraqi PM al-Maliki in Ankara

All papers: The visit of Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki to Turkey receives broad coverage, with the primary focus on issues surrounding the PKK presence in northern Iraq. Papers report that al-Maliki assured Ankara that his government would never allow the presence of elements that constitute a threat to the security of Iraq's neighbors. However, when asked if there were concrete steps planned, besides the closure of PKK offices, Al-Maliki declined to respond. At a joint press conference, PM Erdogan stressed that the control of Kirkuk should not be given to a single ethnic group and warned against fraud in moves to work out disagreements about Kirkuk. Assuring Erdogan on the issue, the Iraqi premier said "Kirkuk is Iraq's city and it will stay in possession of Iraqis in line with the new Iraqi Constitution. We won't let any Iraqi face injustice in the region." Sabah reports that, following his meeting with his Turkish counterpart Edip Baser, Iraqi special envoy for countering the PKK Shirwan al-Waili said "we are determined to end PKK activities, but we want to solve the problem through peaceful means. We are against military operations targeting the PKK in northern Iraq."

Commentators continued to speculate on the US policy for Iraq as well as Iraq's future.

Cengiz Candar writing in the conservative Bugun notes that President Bush is calling in his father's advisors, but sees little cause for optimism that a solution to the Iraq problem will be found: "In the US, every official or unofficial institution is eagerly working on finding ways to exit from Iraq. So far these efforts have come to no avail, and in the long run it will most likely remain that way. The fact of the matter is there is no exit way to find. Displaying a certain helplessness, President Bush now seems closer to his father's team, including some well-known names like the new Defense Secretary Robert Gates, James Baker and Brent Scowcroft. This team

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has some fundamental characteristics. First of all they are conservative. Second, they value stability above everything. Last but not the least, they have no vision. If the Bush administration adopts the style of this team, things in the Middle East will move toward even more chaotic terms and the democratization idea for the region will collapse. I don't share the optimism emerging in the aftermath of the Congressional elections expecting a change in the American policy for Iraq and the Middle East. In the next period to come, the US will continue to experience deep failure -- only in a different way."

Veteran commentator Sami Kohen observes in the mainstream Milliyet that Turkey should keep in mind that the PKK problem cannot be solved in isolation; the issue is the stability of all of Iraq: "Although the Turkish public immediately thinks PKK when Iraq is mentioned, the developments in northern Iraq are in fact directly related to the future of all of Iraq. Therefore controlling the PKK acts in northern Iraq and prevention of an independent Kurdish entity is very difficult in the absence of a nation-wide state authority and national unity in Iraq. Given the circumstances in the country, the visit of the Iraqi Prime Minister to Ankara provided a very important chance to exchange views regarding Iraq's future and discuss possible contributions that Turkey can make. Due to the grave security and stability concerns in Iraq as well as the helplessness of the US, it is hard to be optimistic regardless of official rhetoric, both in Washington and Baghdad, about the progress made so far on restructuring Iraq. An immediate withdrawal of American forces before the Iraqi administration establishes full authority throughout the country can only accelerate chaos and civil war in Iraq. For this reason, al-Maliki calls on the US and all neighbors of Iraq to help turn Iraqi forces into a genuinely powerful force. Realizing this goal requires time and unfortunately time in Iraq works against peace and stability."

Turkey Ousts France from Defense Fair

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Hurriyet, Milliyet and others: Following the actions of the Turkish military, the Turkish government has also reacted to France for the passage of a bill on the Armenian genocide issue. During the introductory meeting of the International Defense Industry Fair (IDEF), Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul announced that France would not be invited to the 8th IDEF in May 2007. Following Gonul's comments, French Embassy Military Attach Jean Claude Gaey walked out of the meeting convened to discuss the fair. Meanwhile, the French Defense Ministry said the Turkish decision to suspend military ties with France is not considered a sign of crisis.

US Helping to Cut off PKK Resources in Europe
Star, Turkiye, Aksam, Zaman: The US is working together with European officials to limit the PKK's financial resources in Europe. A high-ranking US diplomat stated that the PKK receives money by exploiting the open society and freedoms in Europe to smuggle drugs and people, along with other organized crime activities, while engaging in money laundering using its different connections in various countries. The money is used to purchase weapons and equipment for PKK terrorists. The diplomat stressed that the US recently conveyed information obtained on PKK activities in Europe to the relevant European officials.

Olli Rehn Comments on Cyprus
Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, and others: Speaking at the European Parliament, EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn said that it is the UN's responsibility, not the EU's, to resolve the issue in Maras (Varosa). Rehn reiterated his full support for the Finnish plan.

TV Highlights
NTV (6 a.m.)

Domestic News

- Pro-Kurdish Ozgur Gundem newspaper has been suspended from printing for 15 days
- Danish Ambassador in Ankara expressed regret for the search of State Minister Babacan at Copenhagen's airport yesterday

International News

- Thirteen people were killed and nine were wounded in various attacks in Iraq's capital Baghdad

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